



A note from

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77TH Street Area Senior Lead Unit

Basic Car 12A58

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Project: History of the Los Angeles Police Department's 77th Street Patrol Division

It is my distinct honor to have been granted the opportunity to write and endorse a letter on the History of The Los Angeles Police Department's 77th Street Patrol Division on the 150th anniversary of the Los Angeles Police Department.

I am a Los Angeles Police Officer, and have been for the past thirty-three years. I have had the distinct pleasure of serving the South Los Angeles community for the majority of the above described period. I currently monitor and have oversight responsibilities of Basic Car 12A58 within the heart of the inter-city area, referred to as South Los Angeles.

In my career, I have had the pleasure of working just about every specialized unit in 77th Street and South Bureau. On several occasions, I had the distinct honor representing and hosting several foreign dignitaries, diplomats, royal families and City leaders, including representing the City of Los Angeles, and the United States on leadership dialog and promoting our departments community policing concepts.

As to our early years of Los Angeles, like those of so many other Western towns, were rocked by violence and unbridled lawlessness a true "Wild Wild West" story. The opportunity to acquire sudden wealth by any means available, together with the absence of sorely needed laws and an adequate number of police officers, offered an open invitation to thieves, gun-slingers, gamblers and con-artists of every variety.

These were the realities which the newly born municipality struggled to overcome during the first tumultuous years which followed its incorporation as a City in 1850. A degree of maturity was attained by the city with the establishment in 1869 of the first paid police force.

It is from the humblest of beginnings that this, a world-renowned police agency would evolve. A pioneering spirit has always driven the Los Angeles Police Department, it's true strength drawn

from its people. Those who have worn the patchless navy- blue uniform represented the finest this professional pursuit has ever offered.

The first in so many regards were this police force: first to hire policewomen, first to form a crime lab, first to form a SWAT capability and first to form a Community Relations Program. Expected too were these professionals to be the first line of defense, protecting Angelinos from enemies, foreign and domestic. Indeed, those who served this city were the first to engage disasters, whether man-made or natural.

In 1889, it was instilled within the department the beginnings of true professionalism. By the turn of the century, Los Angeles Policemen were referred to as “The Pride of the State”. Sworn Personnel in 1897 to total of 69 officers assigned to patrol duties. During this period plainclothes officers, detectives, mounted officers and patrolmen earned approximately \$1,000.00 a year.

In March 30, 1889, all patrol personnel including the City’s first African-American officer, Robert William Stewart. Mrs. Lucy Gray became the first Police Matron in 1888, some 32 years before women were given the right to vote, however Ms. Alice Stebbins Wells, meanwhile, won a permanent place in history of Law Enforcement in 1910 when she became the world’s first official policewoman.

The City was growing at an alarming rate, it was not until 1922 that a bond brought new station to Hollywood, Wilshire, West Los Angeles, the Valley, Highland Park, Newton, Venice and 77th Street. The Los Angeles Police Department’s 77th Street Division was Established in 1925 opening its doors on June 16, 1925 the area consisted of 34 square miles (covering from the USC area to the Harbor) with a population of less than 80,000.

Police Officers serviced the South Los Angeles community from it new location at 235 West 77th Street, Los Angeles California 90003. At the time 77th Street area was accurately described as a “Sleepy Hollow Division”.

Dramatic population increases took place following the war. By 1947 the population of the area soured to over 200,000 with a corresponding increase in the number of police personnel to 130. Racial and economic changes to the population during the 50’s and 60’s created an entirely different police atmosphere.

The station facility, has undergone significant changes during the intervening years, construction in 1957 thru 1958 added several hundred square feet to the west and north sides of the original facility. 77th Street soon assumed the role of an extremely busy division. On July 31, 1946, 77th Street lost the first of five officers to be killed in the line of duty. Long gone was the “Sleepy Hollow” atmosphere.

In August 1965, a routine traffic stop by California Highway Patrol officers in 77th Street Division ignited the Watts Riot. For several weeks, the area was literally engulfed in flames. Most of the area’s businesses were either destroyed or damaged by vandalism and violence which erupted during those hot summer days and nights. In 1966, 77th Street Division was

designated as one the four areas in the city to initiate to community relations program. The effort proved so successful that it was soon recognized as the model for the city.

77th Street Division Officers played a vital role in many high-profile events in our community's history such as the 1969 "Black Panther Shootout, in 1974 the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) Shootout which was broadcasted on live on national television and in 1991 the Department and the City of Los Angeles were rocked by a series of crises touched off by the Rodney King incident.

In 1992, Los Angeles was the victim of a major civil disturbance were as again our community was destroyed by means of fires, violence and major vandalism, the incident was also covered on National and local news outlets referred to as the flash point "Florence Avenue & Normandie Avenue".

The 77th Street South Los Angeles community area, located south of the Metropolitan downtown area has become the heart of the inter-city. The surrounding area is recognized for its historic violent past and several national headlines. Our community has endured many challenges, including several incidents of fear, crime and the ever growing gang culture. The area has been described as a residentially blighted community with dilapidated buildings scored with graffiti.

Our community currently hungers for an opportunity for growth and re-development; however it has struggled in its efforts to embrace confident investors, perhaps due to its violent past history. However, I am happy to announce that within the past several years due to many collaborative efforts our community has made great strides and continues to make wonderful progress.

We continue to celebrate efforts in the reduction of crime within the South Los Angeles area, to the delights of our community. During this period we have built many relationships that have helped heal many old wounds that have enabled us to move forward. This is yet another wonderful opportunity to embrace forward thinking and become the pioneers of progress.

It's not by accident that Law Enforcement agencies across the globe visit our facility, as they pay tribute to the brave men and women of 77th Street Division for its known reputation around the world for policing tactics.

We shall always honor the past, acknowledge present and nurture future as we pursue the policing excellence. We shall pay tribute to our 77th Street training program for we have been acknowledged as the premier training division for all positions, as we pay homage to our slogan "The Tradition Continues" ...

If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact me at, (323) 387-9605

Sincerely,

Martin B. Martinez
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Seventy-Seventh Street Patrol Division